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Addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum disorders and other developmental disorders

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Addressing the socioeconomic needs of individuals, families and societies affected by autism spectrum disorders (ASD), developmental disorders (DD) and associated disabilities

The General Assembly,

Guided by the purposes and principles enshrined in the Charter of the United Nations,

Recalling the 2005 World Summit Outcome[1] and the United Nations Millennium Declaration,[2] as well as the outcomes of the major United Nations conferences and summits in the economic, social and related fields,

Recalling the Declaration of Alma-Ata,[3] the Ottawa Charter for Health Promotion, 1986, and subsequent relevant resolutions of the World Health Assembly and Regional Committees,

Recalling also the Convention on the Rights of the Child[4] and the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities,[5] according to which individuals with disabilities should enjoy a full and decent life, in conditions which ensure dignity,

[1] Resolution 60/1.
[2] Resolution 55/2.
[3] See *Report of the International Conference on Primary Health Care, Alma-Ata, Kazakhstan, 6-12 September 1978* (Geneva, World Health Organization, 1978).
[4] United Nations, *Treaty Series*, vol. 1577, No. 27531.
[5] Ibid., vol. 2515, No. 44910.

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promote self-reliance and facilitate the individual's active participation in the community, as well as the full enjoyment of all human rights and fundamental freedoms on an equal basis with other individuals,

Recognizing the need to promote and protect the human rights of all persons with disabilities, including all individuals with autism spectrum disorders, by, inter alia, ensuring equal opportunities to achieve their optimal developmental potential and to participate in society,

Recognizing the important contribution that non-governmental organizations and other civil society actors can make in promoting human rights for persons with disabilities, including all individuals with autism spectrum disorders (ASD), developmental disorders (DD) and associated disabilities, and their integration in societies, as well as addressing the socioeconomic needs of their families and communities,

Reaffirming the universality, indivisibility, interdependence and interrelatedness of all human rights and fundamental freedoms and the need for persons with disabilities to be guaranteed their full enjoyment without discrimination,

Affirming that ensuring and promoting the full realization of all human rights and fundamental freedoms for all persons with disabilities, without distinction, is critical to achieving internationally agreed development goals,

Recalling its resolution 66/124 of 19 December 2011, by which it decided to convene a one-day high-level meeting of the General Assembly, on 23 September 2013, with the overarching theme "The way forward: a disability-inclusive development agenda towards 2015 and beyond", which shall be funded within existing resources, in order to strengthen efforts to ensure accessibility for and the inclusion of persons with disabilities in all aspects of development efforts,

Aware that autism is a lifelong developmental disability that affects the functioning of the brain, characterized by impairments in social interaction, problems with verbal and non-verbal communication and restricted, repetitive behaviour, interests and activities,

Aware also that the vast variety of needs of individuals with ASD, DD and associated disabilities poses a substantial challenge to addressing the disability and providing the appropriate services for treatment and care by Government and non-governmental organizations,

Deeply concerned that children with ASD, DD and associated disabilities in all regions of the world experience challenges in accessing long-term health care, education, training and intervention programmes undertaken by Governments, non-governmental organizations and the private sector,

Concerned also that those persons with ASD, DD and associated disabilities continue to face barriers in their participation as equal members of society, and reaffirming that discrimination against any person on the basis of disability is a violation of the inherent dignity and worth of the human person,

Recalling that early diagnosis, appropriate research and effective interventions are vital to the growth and development of the individual, and emphasizing that early intervention is crucial for addressing the needs of the individual with ASD, DD and associated disabilities, thus improving the opportunities to live a quality life

with the ability to participate in the greater community and increasing the likelihood that an individual will need lower levels of support later in life,

Recognizing that the full enjoyment by persons with ASD, DD and associated disabilities of their human rights and their full participation will result in significant advances in the social and economic development of societies and communities,

Realizing that the challenge of meeting the needs of individuals with ASD, DD and associated disabilities is particularly acute in the developing world, resulting in increased difficulties for individuals and their families, as well as for the health, education and social welfare systems trying to meet their needs,

Further recognizing the work of the World Health Organization in addressing ASD, DD and associated disabilities in its resolutions, notably through resolution 65.4 entitled "The global burden of mental disorders and the need for a comprehensive, coordinated response from health and social sectors at the country level", adopted by the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly, requesting the Director General of the World Health Organization to develop a comprehensive mental health action plan, for consideration by the Sixty-sixth World Health Assembly,[6]

Recognizing that a major barrier to improving the health and well-being of children with ASD, DD and associated disabilities and their families is the paucity of knowledge and expertise to recognize symptoms and identify ASD, and also recognizing hat the absence of effective routine screening that allows for early detection, in turn, limits access to care and early interventions and that, without research to develop and implement effective programmes, the emergence of appropriate solutions that improve the quality of life for individuals with ASD and their families does not occur,

Acknowledging efforts to increase awareness of the rights of those affected by ASD, DD and associated disabilities, including the commemoration of World Autism Awareness Day, which led to increased international public concern for autism and other developmental disabilities,

Taking note of the Dhaka Declaration on Autism Spectrum Disorders and Developmental Disabilities of 25 July 2011,

1. *Encourages* Member States to enhance access to appropriate support services and equal opportunities for inclusion and participation in society by providing, as appropriate, training to public administrators, service providers, carers, caregivers, families and non-professionals on the needs and rights of persons with ASD, DD and associated disabilities;

2. *Recognizes* that, in order to develop and implement feasible, effective and sustainable intervention programmes for addressing ASD, DD and associated disabilities, an innovative, integrated approach would benefit from a focus, inter alia, on:

(a) Increasing public and professional awareness of ASD, DD and associated disabilities and reducing stigma associated with these conditions;

[6] See World Health Organization, *Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly, Geneva, 21-26 May 2012, Resolutions and Decisions, Annexes* (WHA65/2012/REC/1).

(b) Enhancing and increasing research expertise and service delivery, including through international collaboration, by training researchers, service providers as well as non-professionals in early diagnosis and interventions within health and other relevant sectors;

(c) Enhancing inclusive educational programmes suited to infants, children and adults with autism;

(d) Emphasizing the unique needs of each person with autism across a spectrum of different characteristics and experiences;

(e) Increasing awareness of the advantages of the inclusion of individuals with ASD, DD and associated disabilities in the society through occupational and leisure activities;

3. *Encourages* Member States to undertake to collect appropriate information, including disaggregated statistical and research data, on ASD, DD and associated disabilities;

4. *Looks forward* to the development of the World Health Organization's comprehensive mental health action plan, as called for in resolution 65.4, entitled "The global burden of mental disorders and the need for a comprehensive, coordinated response from health and social sectors at the country level", adopted by the Sixty-fifth World Health Assembly, and its consideration of ASD in the context of a broader systems approach;

5. *Calls upon* all States to ensure an inclusive education system at all levels and lifelong learning, as well as to promote vocational training and skills development programmes for persons with autism, in accordance with the Convention on the Rights of Persons with Disabilities and other local, national and regional policies;

6. *Also calls upon* all States to enable persons with ASD, DD and associated disabilities to learn life and social development skills to facilitate their full and equal participation in education and as members of the community;

7. *Requests* the Secretary-General to bring the present resolution to the attention of all Member States and United Nations organizations as a contribution to the preparations for the high-level meeting of the General Assembly on the realization of the Millennium Development Goals and other internationally agreed development goals for persons with disabilities to be held on 23 September 2013.